

§ 96-14.1. Unemployment benefits.

(a) Purpose. – The purpose of this Article is to provide temporary unemployment benefits as required by federal law to an individual who is unemployed through no fault on the part of the individual and who is able, available, and actively seeking work. Benefits are payable on the basis of service, to which section 3309(a)(1) of the Code applies, performed for a governmental entity, a nonprofit organization, and an Indian tribe in the same amount, on the same terms, and subject to the same conditions as compensation payable on the basis of other service.

(b) Valid Claim. – To obtain benefits, an individual must file a valid claim for unemployment benefits, register for work, and have a weekly benefit amount calculated pursuant to G.S. 96-14.2(a) that equals or exceeds fifteen dollars (\$15.00). An individual must serve a one-week waiting period for each claim filed, except no waiting period applies under this subsection to a claim for unemployment due directly to a disaster covered by a federal disaster declaration. A valid claim is one that meets the employment and wage standards in this subsection for the individual's base period. A valid claim for a second benefit year is one that meets the employment and wage standards in this subsection since the beginning date of the prior benefit year and before the date the new benefit claim is filed:

- (1) Employment. – The individual has been paid wages in at least two quarters of the individual's base period.
- (2) Wages. – The individual has been paid wages totaling at least six times the average weekly insured wage during the individual's base period. If an individual lacks sufficient base period wages, then the wage standard for that individual is determined using the last four completed calendar quarters immediately preceding the first day of the individual's benefit year. This alternative base period may not be used by an individual in making a claim for benefits in the next benefit year.

(c) Qualification Determination. – An individual's qualification for benefits is determined based on the reason for separation from employment from the individual's bona fide employer. The individual's bona fide employer is the most recent employer for whom the individual began employment for an indefinite duration or a duration of more than 30 consecutive calendar days, regardless of whether work was performed on all of those days. An individual who is disqualified has no right to benefits. An individual who is disqualified may have the disqualification removed if the individual files a valid claim based on employment with a bona fide employer that employed the individual subsequent to the employment that resulted in disqualification. An individual who had a prior disqualification removed may be determined to be disqualified based on the reason for separation from employment from the individual's most recent bona fide employer, and the individual must be otherwise eligible for benefits.

(d) Eligibility for Benefits. – The Division must calculate a weekly benefit amount and determine the duration of benefits for an individual who files a valid claim and qualifies for benefits. To receive the weekly benefit amount, the Division must find that the individual meets the work search eligibility requirements for each week of the benefit period. An individual who fails to meet the work search requirements for a given week is ineligible to receive a benefit until the condition causing the ineligibility ceases to exist.

(e) Federal Restrictions. – Benefits are not payable for services performed by the following individuals, to the maximum extent allowed by section 3304 of the Code:

- (1) Instructional, research, or principal administrative employees of educational institutions.
- (2) Employees who provide services in any other capacity for an educational institution.

- (3) Individuals who performed services described in either subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection in an educational institution while in the employ of an educational service agency. The term "educational service agency" has the same meaning as defined in section 3304 of the Code.
- (4) Professional athletes.
- (5) Aliens. (2013-2, s. 5; 2013-224, ss. 12, 19; 2013-391, s. 3; 2015-238, s. 2.10(a); 2017-8, s. 1(c).)